

SECRET

6 October 1965

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Movement of Cuban SAM Sites

The surface-to-air missile (SAM) system was originally emplaced to provide defense for the offensive Soviet missiles in Cuba. We believe they were emplaced on an island-wide basis as a defense against US high altitude reconnaissance, either in hopes that the presence of the SAMs would deter the US from continuing such flights (and thereby discovering the presence of the offensive missiles) or so that the Soviets and/or Cubans would be able to destroy a US high-altitude plane (which they did in October 1962).

With the removal of the offensive missiles and the subsequent withdrawal of most of the Russian personnel and their more advanced radar, the remaining radar systems could not provide interlocking coverage of the entire coastline. We believe that the Cubans therefore decided that--rather than attempt to install more missiles to provide complete coastal defense--they should concentrate the missiles they had so as to defend their most important cities and major military installations. This they began to do in June 1964. The new arrangement provides greater administrative control over individual missile sites and eases the logistics problem as well.

The Cubans continue to improve their air defense capability. Recent photography reveals one new SAM site in the vicinity of Havana and another under construction on the outskirts of Santa Clara. When the second of these sites is completed, there will be 23 operational SAM sites. The Cubans will still have sufficient equipment to furnish at least one more SAM site.

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